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South Korea to play its Olympic card immediately

By Edward Neilan
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SEOUL, South Korea — The Olympic flame had hardly flickered out at Chamsil stadium last night as South Korea began to harness and carry the momentum of a successful Olympiad into the diplomatic arena.

President Roh Tae-woo goes before the National Assembly tomorrow for what is being billed as a major address to call for expanded initiatives toward North Korea specifically and with communist countries generally.

He is expected to cite the Olympic accomplishment as an example of what Koreans can do, and repeat his

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challenge to North Korean leader Kim Il-sung for a summit meeting.

The same theme will be sounded at the next face-to-face North-South meeting of legislators when representatives reconvene at Panmun-

jom for a series of talks that recessed in late August after getting nowhere.

This time, South Korea will bring to the table the enhanced image of having entertained almost flawlessly the biggest Olympics in history and one that North Korea could

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not cripple through its boycott. The Games were the first since 1976 not boycotted by a superpower.

On the domestic front, the government is expected to release 52 political prisoners today in a move to set a post-Olympic tone of reconciliation.

On Oct. 18, Mr. Roh will address the United Nations General Assembly, another first for a Korean head of state. He is expected to ask for joint membership for the two Koreas in the body to bring their differences inside the world forum and to press for implementation of the "cross-recognition" concept.

As the post-Olympics scene unfolds, Seoul and Washington are in close consultation, as evidenced by the presence here of Michael Armacost, U.S. undersecretary of state for political affairs.

With South Korea's new official trade ties with Hungary, expanded trade links with China already signed and other arrangements with communist countries in the cards, regional foreign policies are expected to become more delicate, complex and challenging.

"It is anticipated that North Korea will strongly oppose or block our 'Nordpolitik' diplomacy because our overtures to China and the Soviet Union will result in the isolation of Pyongyang," Foreign Minister Choi Kwang-soo said recently.

"Therefore, improvement of relations between the United States, Japan and North Korea is necessary to



Roh Tae-woo

some extent."

But Mr. Choi rejected a basic North Korean demand. "The withdrawal of American forces from Korea cannot be a precondition... cannot be an obstruction to serious negotiations between the two parts of Korea."

From nearly every quarter, the Seoul Olympics were pronounced a success.

"When I came here with the U.S. Army in 1953, Seoul was totally destroyed," said Korean-American diving star Sammy Lee, who won gold medals for the United States in 1948 and 1952. "Who would have thought 35 years later I'd be here as a guest of Seoul's Olympic planners? Its incredible."

"As a young diver I wanted to show the world what a Korean could do with freedom," he said. "The Seoul Olympics are an American success story, too. They show what a country

like Korea can do with the freedom which has been secured with the lives and sacrifice of thousands of Americans," he said.

In a broader sense, the Olympic media blitz brought to the world's attention not only South Korea but Asia, the fastest-developing part of the world.

South Korea's "can do" spirit also provided a model for the rest of Asia on the playing fields and in the gymnasiums at the Games. At the final count of medals, South Korea placed a remarkable fourth after the Soviet Union, East Germany and the United States with 12 gold, 10 silver and 11 bronze for a total of 33 medals.

China, with a population nearly 30 times that of South Korea's 42 million, ranked 11th with 28 medals including five golds. Japan, in 14th place was third-highest ranked finisher from Asia. It won 14 medals, four of them gold.

Devastated by the 1950-53 Korean War, South Korea now finds itself under pressure from the United States and others to open its markets and make economic adjustments after a growth of 12 percent last year.

Held up as a model for Third World growth, South Korea has in recent weeks impressed communist nations, which have no official ties with the country.

"The Russians and the Chinese know exactly what we have achieved because it was their [Soviet] planes and tanks and [Chinese] troops that flattened Seoul in the Korean War," said former government official Kim Kyu-hong.

• Mike Breen contributed to this report in Seoul.